

ASPECTOS CLIMATOLÓGICOS DE LA PRECIPITACIÓN EN LA ZONA MEDITERRÁNEA ESPAÑOLA

Doctorat en Medi Ambient – Canvi Climàtic
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SOME ILLUSTRATIVE WORDS

"The inhabitants of the countries of the Mediterranean basin are quite aware of the frequent occurrence of severe weather in the Mediterranean region, such as heavy rainfall and strong winds associated with extreme weather events. Rainfalls of over 200 mm, and in some extreme cases, in excess of 800 mm, in 24 hours have been known to occur from time to time, while sustained wind speeds in excess of 100 km/h have been recorded in connection with events such as the Mistral, Tramontane, Ethesian and the Bora. As a result of these phenomena, significant losses in life and property are frequently reported in many countries. We recall some of the events which made headline news in the last few years. These include the exceptional and extensive heavy rains which affected wide parts of Egypt, including the Sinai Peninsula, in November 1994. In that event, more than 500 people lost their lives and large areas were inundated; even the famous ancient tombs of Luxor were menaced by flood surges. Fifty people died when a bridge collapsed after heavy rains in northern Algeria in October 1995. Torrential cloudbursts, reported to be the worst in 80 years at some locations, caused severe, widespread flooding and landslides in Southeast France, Corsica and north-western Italy during a four-day period in early November 1994. Over 50 lives were lost and thousands were left homeless in France, while the floods in Italy were even worse than the notorious event of November 1951 when the River Po overflowed its banks. Economic losses in northern Italy were reported at US \$9 billion. During 1996 as a whole, several periods of above normal precipitation affected the Mediterranean basin. The drought-prone regions of southern Spain and northern Morocco received annual precipitation between 700 to 900 mm above normal, while 250 to 750 mm above normal were received in other areas on both sides of the western half of Mediterranean. Despite the benefits of the rainfall, excessive amounts resulted in some deaths, dislocation of people and significant crop damage. Notable example is the disastrous flash flood which caused significant loss of life at a camp site in Spain in August last year."

(Prof. Obasi, Secretary-General WMO, Opening address at the INM/WMO International Symposium on Cyclones and Hazardous Weather in the Mediterranean, Palma de Mallorca, Spain, 14 April 1997)

Specific ideas (heavy rain) - 1

- Most frequent in late summer and autumn: Role of the **Mediterranean air-mass** (warm and wet at low levels – convective instability).
- Also needed a **mechanism** to force air **ascent** and a **feeding current** of warm and wet air towards the area of sustained heavy rain.
- Role of a **Mediterranean low, not necessarily deep and strong**, by organizing differentiated air currents and low-level frontal boundaries (optimum area to reach and/or release the convective instability at the tip of the warm-wet current, where intersecting a thermal-humidity boundary). Upper-level forcing is not a critical ingredient.
- Or a **mountain barrier** (notice the Mediterranean basin) instead of the boundary to force the ascent of the warm-wet current. Commonly, both factors in combination.

Specific ideas (heavy rain) - 2

- A near **cyclonic centre** is found in more than **70%** of the cases of heavy rain in the western Mediterranean region, usually located in a position compatible with the previous conceptual model.
- Even in cases of deep and self-organized convection (**MCS**), the close presence of a cyclone centre is detected in about **65%** of the cases.
- But **some Mediterranean heavy rain** events depart from the previous conceptual model: Strong and deep upward forcing, that is, dynamically driven cases usually related to **intense cyclogenesis** (continuous stratiform rain, although convective instability is easily reached and released – embedded convection). Symmetric instability and slantwise convection could also play a role.

Specific ideas (strong winds)

- Not necessarily linked to intense cyclones: **Local strong winds** (Mistral, Tramontane, Cierzo, Ponent, Levante, Scirocco, Etesians, Bora, Shamsin, Sharav, etc ...) owing to geographical factors.
- **Orographically induced pressure perturbation**: lee depression and/or the associated windward high-pressure. By its very nature, these local winds tend to be shallow (1.5-2 km), and in the case of cold air outbreaks, act as gravity currents.
- **Indirect effect** of the local winds: Formation of cyclonic and anticyclonic potential vorticity **-PV- banners**.
- But neither the orographically induced primary lee (warm) depressions and the positive PV banners, very frequent, can be considered as **true cyclogenesis**.

Specific ideas (cyclones) - 1

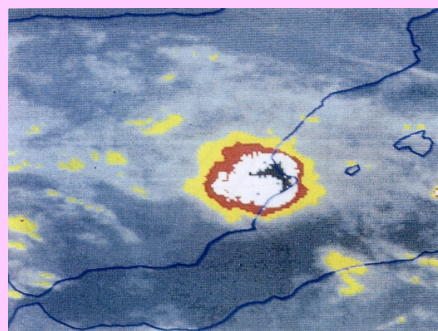
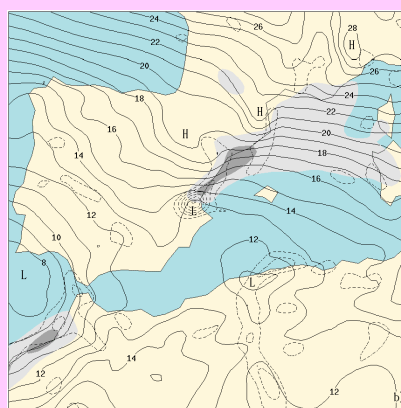
- Mediterranean area: **highest concentration** of true cyclogenesis in the world, at least in winter. Some events reaching the category of “meteorological bombs”.
- **Preferential areas**: Genoa region, Cyprus and Aegean region, Adriatic, Palos-Algerian sea, Catalanian-Balearic sea and gulf of Lyon. Also, shallow thermal lows over the Iberian-African plateau.
- **High concentration of cyclones** as a result of the particular geography of the Mediterranean region: Very frequent lee warm primary depressions and low-level positive PV banners ready to interact with upper-level PV positive anomalies when moving over the region (explanation **based on PV thinking**)

Specific ideas (cyclones) - 2

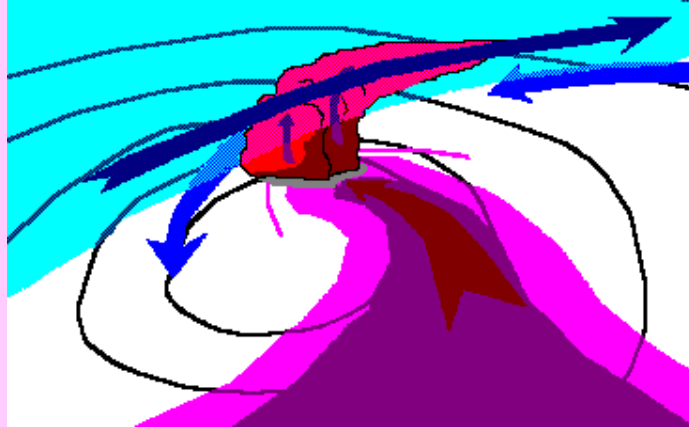
- Role of **latent heat release** for the spin-up and/or sustenance of the cyclone (considered as a **secondary** effect for orographic cyclogenesis events).
- **However**, some cyclones owe their source of energy to the great amount of latent heat released in big convective cloud clusters (CISK, air-sea interaction): **Quasi-tropical cyclones**.
- **And other influences** of latent heat release, not necessarily linked to convection (e.g., enhanced baroclinic instability in saturated air, etc.).
- The most likely scenario for any given **cyclone is a mixture** of physical processes such as those described !!!

Example (A): Gandía flood:

MCS (33 h, 200 km diameter)
1000 mm / 36 h

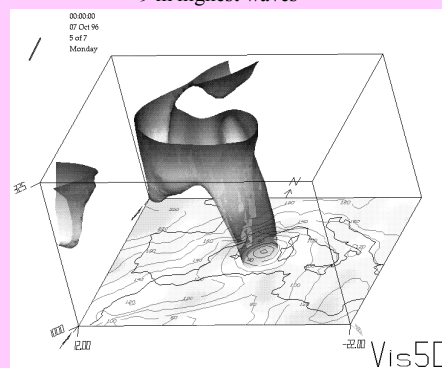


Type (A): The cyclone (that can be shallow; e.g. orographic origin) organises the inflow of moist and warm Mediterranean air



Example (B): Sardinian cyclone:

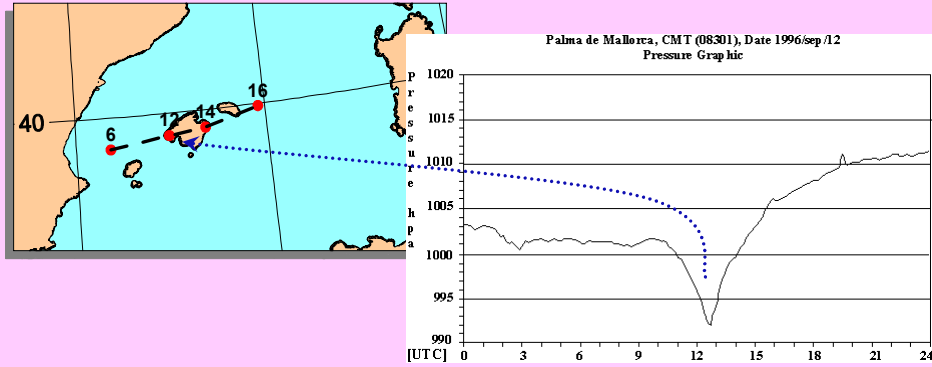
>100 mm in 3 hrs
118 km/h wind gust
9 m highest waves



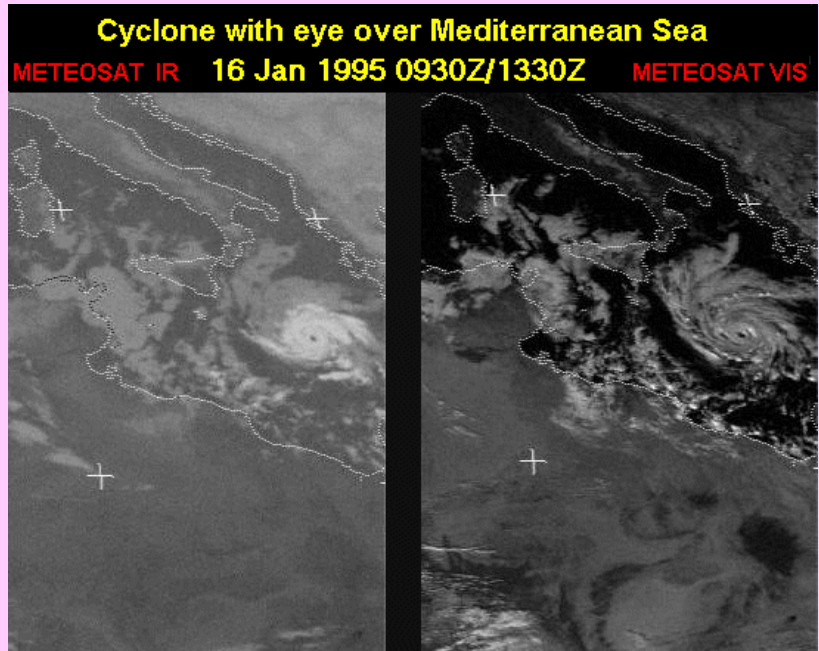
Type (B): deep cyclone and hazardous weather are two aspects of the same evolution (baroclinic origin)

Example (C): Quasi-tropical cyclone:

115 km/h wind gust
27 mm/ 1 h

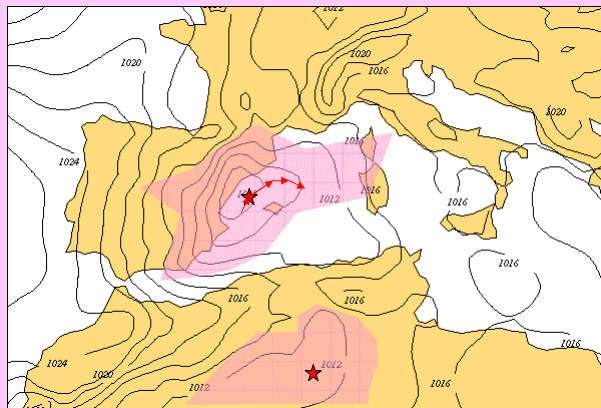


Type (C): cyclone driven by latent heat release
(as a result of previous heavy rain)



DATA BASE OF MEDITERRANEAN CYCLONES

Thanks to my colleagues from the INM center in the Balearics !!!



Data base of cyclones

The methodology already implemented permits:

Objective and automatic detection of cyclones
+
Dynamical description

For example:

Detection

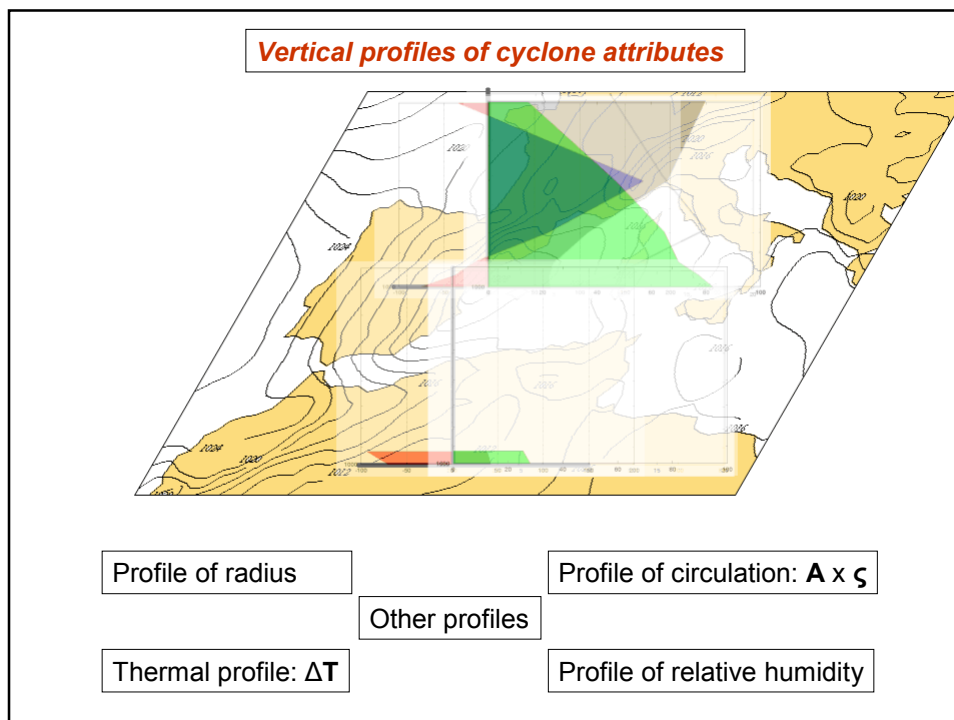
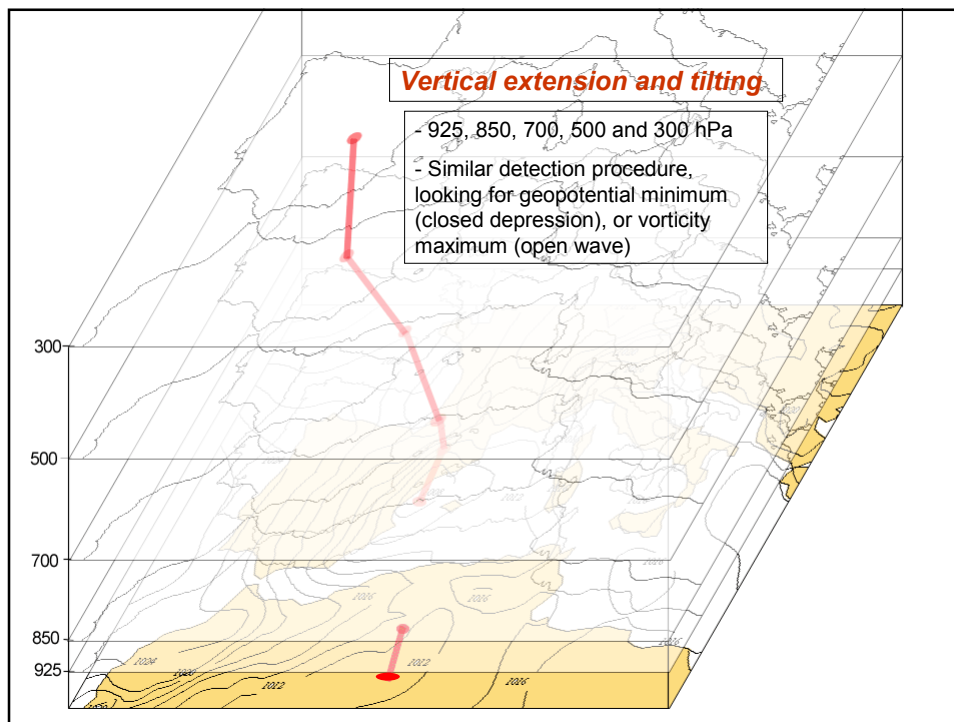
- Smoothed SLP: Cressman filter with a radius of influence of 200 km
- Relative minimum of SLP
- Pressure gradient ≥ 0.5 hPa/100 km in at least 6 of the 8 main directions

Tracking

- Cyclone detected on successive analysis times within elliptical area defined by the average wind at 700 hPa (steering level)

Domain

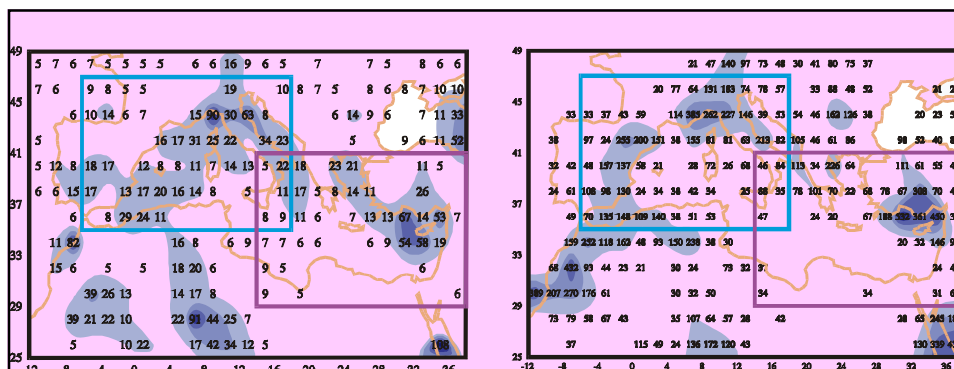
- Region of positive geostrophic vorticity around the cyclone center. This defines its mean radius (has to be ≥ 100 km)



COMPARISON BETWEEN WEST AND EAST MEDITERRANEAN BASINS

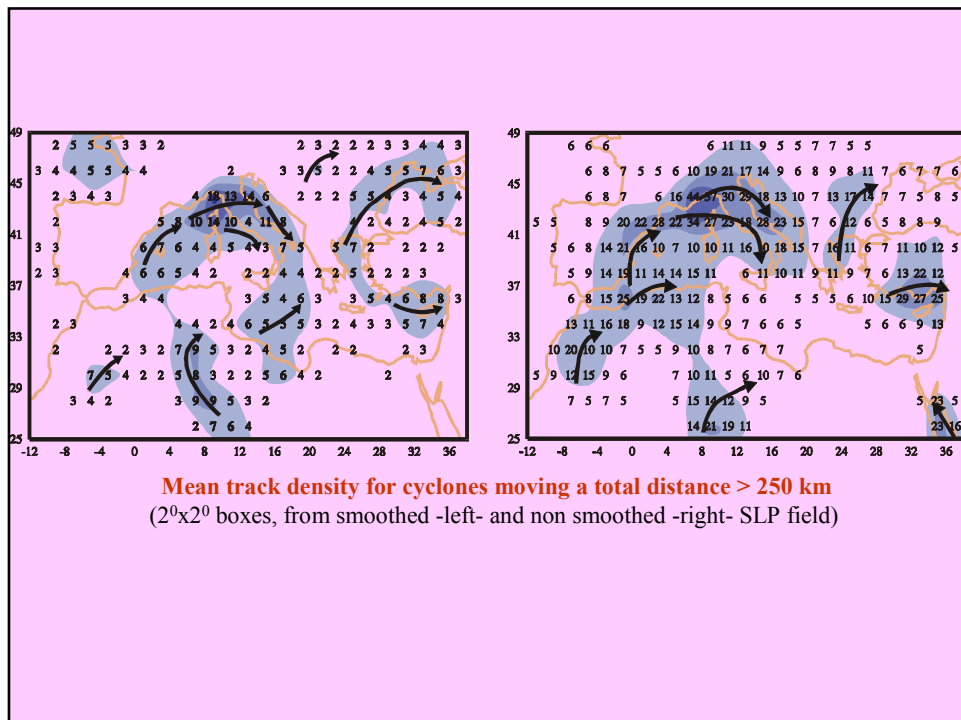
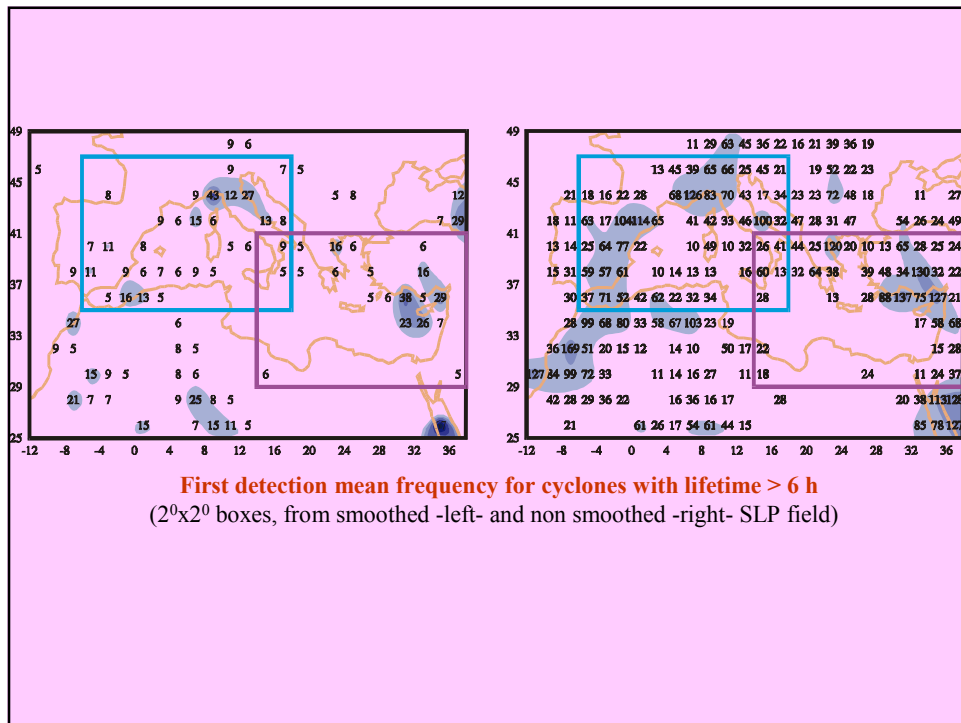
Using ECMWF-0.5° analyses (00, 06, 12 and 18 UTC)

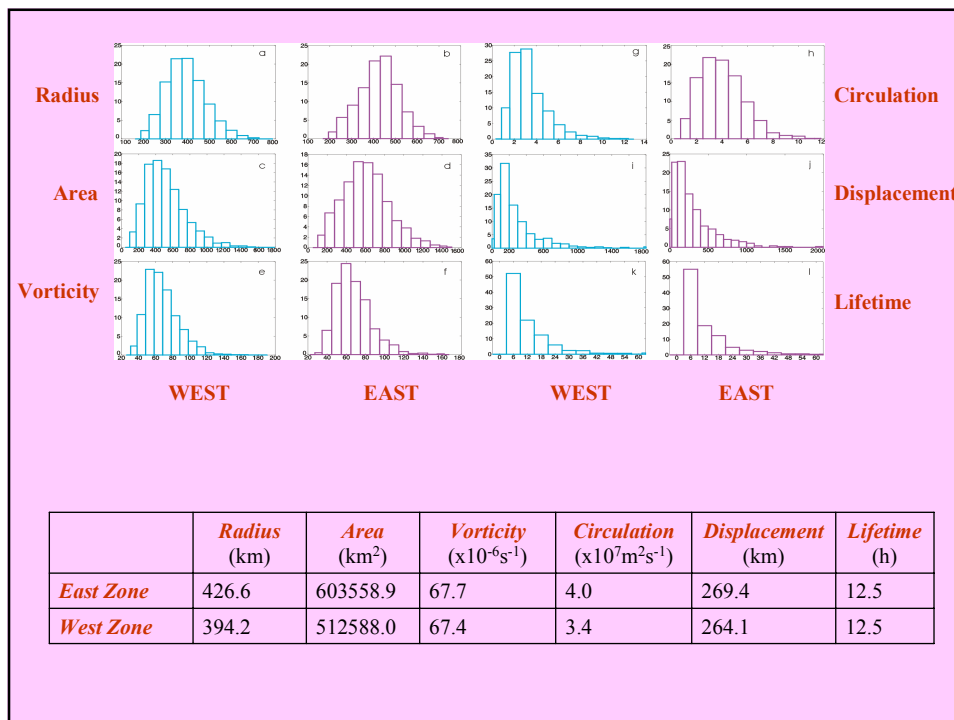
June 1998-May 2001 (only surface cyclones and annual analysis)



Annual mean frequency of detected cyclonic centres
(2°x2° boxes, from smoothed -left- and non smoothed -right- SLP field)

<i>Mean number of cyclones</i>	<i>Smoothed</i>	<i>Non smoothed</i>
<i>East Zone</i>	353	2248
<i>West Zone</i>	437	2910



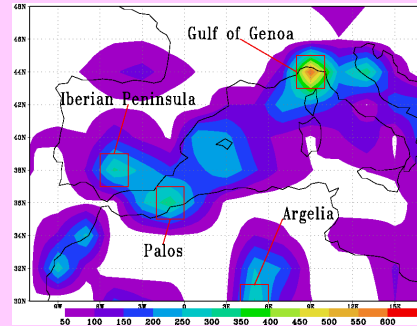


WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN CYCLONES

Using HIRLAM-INM-0.5⁰ analyses (00, 06, 12 and 18 UTC)

June 1995-May 2002 (3D structure and seasonal analysis)

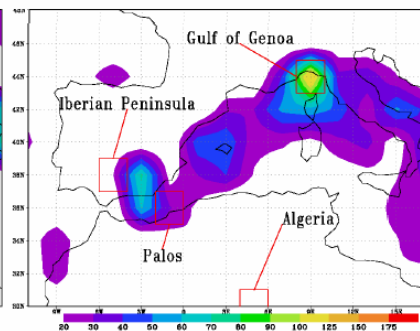
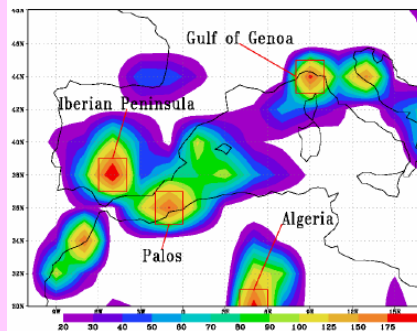
NUMBER OF CYCLONES



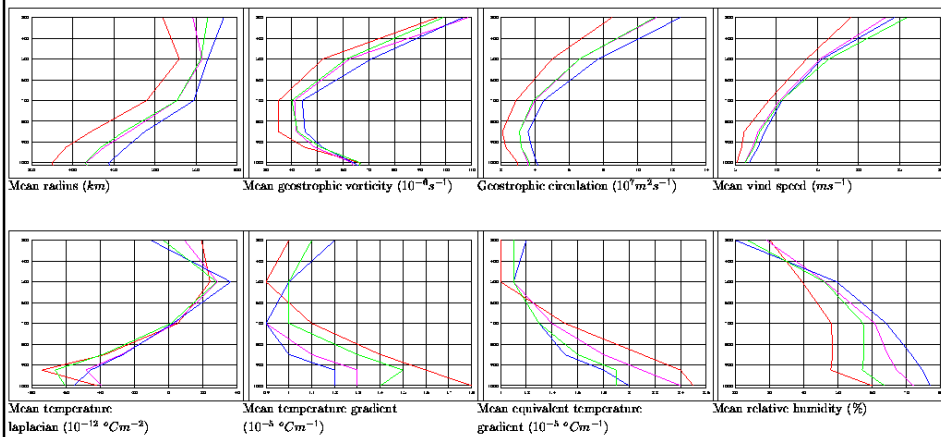
Total

Summer

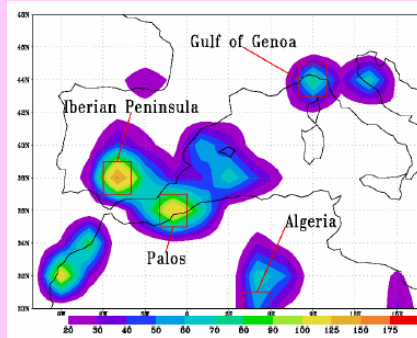
Winter



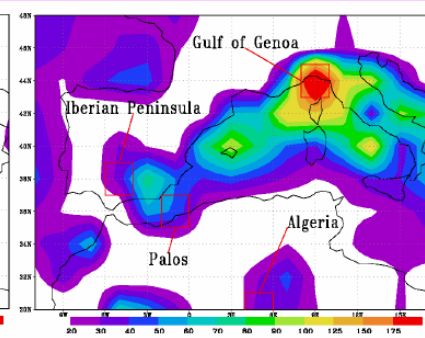
Mean seasonal vertical profiles of cyclone attributes: Summer (red), Autumn (purple), Winter (blue) and Spring (green)



Shallow (1000-925 hPa)

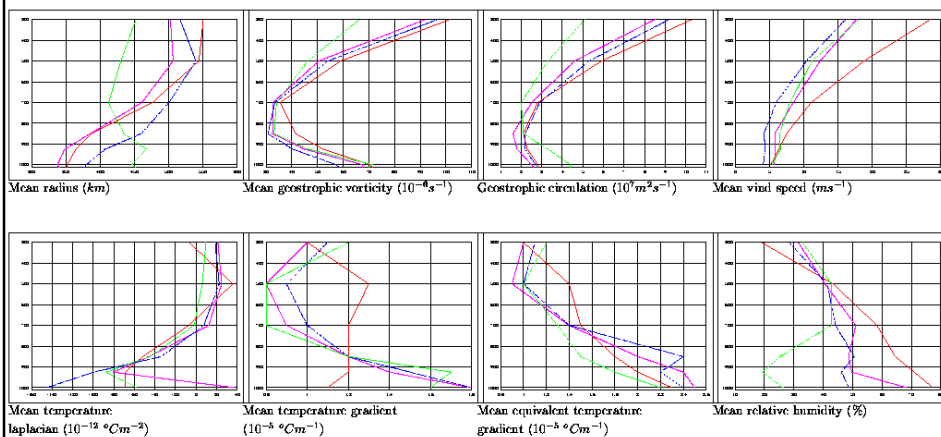


Deep (1000-300 hPa)



	<i>Summer</i>	<i>Autumn</i>	<i>Winter</i>	<i>Spring</i>	<i>G Genoa</i>	<i>Palos</i>	<i>Iberian</i>	<i>Algeria</i>
<i>Shallow</i>	70.5	43.6	31.8	46.3	41.9	79.6	80.7	79.0
<i>Medium</i>	9.5	12.1	11.7	12.1	14.6	6.0	8.4	9.5
<i>Deep</i>	20.0	44.3	56.5	41.6	43.5	14.4	10.9	11.5

Mean vertical profiles of cyclone attributes for different regions:
Gulf of Genoa (red), Palos (purple), Iberian Peninsula (blue) and Algeria (green)



HEAVY RAIN AND CYCLONES IN THE WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN

Using HIRLAM-INM-0.5° analyses (00, 06, 12 and 18 UTC)

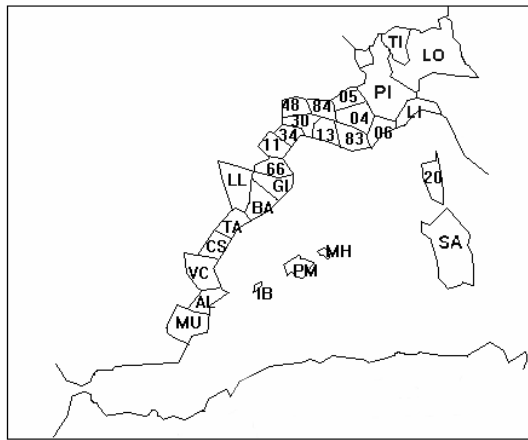
June 1995-November 1996 (simultaneity with heavy rain)

Heavy Rain Database

- 28 “territorial units” (departments, provinces or islands).
- Heavy Rain threshold ≥ 60 mm/24h.
- GTS and non-GTS data.
- Period: from June 95 to November 96.

Heavy rain event: if the threshold was surpassed in at least one station of any “territorial unit”:

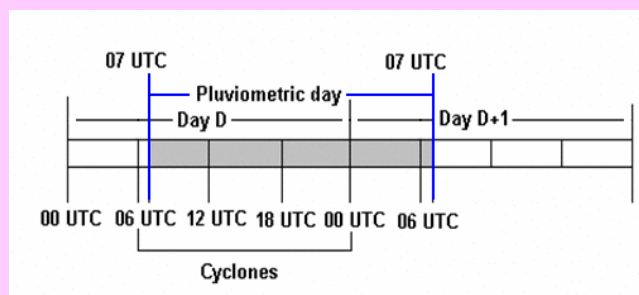
(160 days / 300 events)



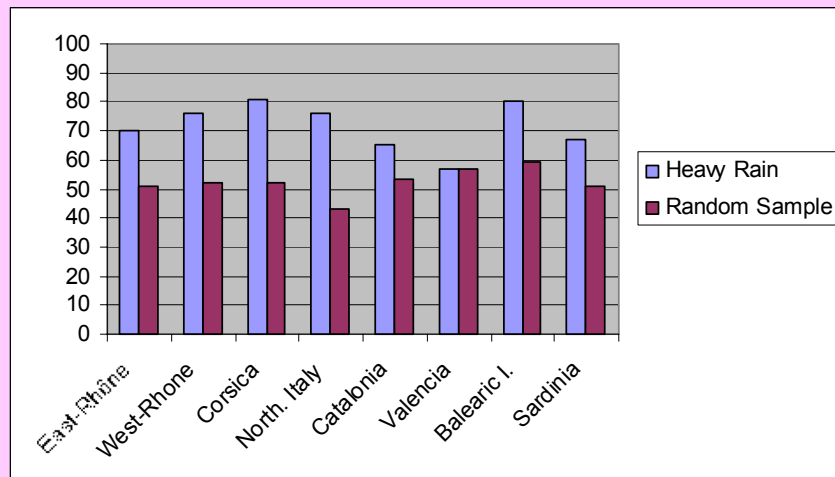
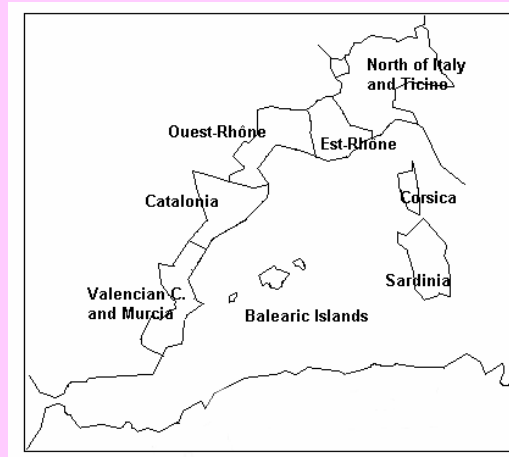
66: Perpignan	TI: Ticino
11: Carcasone	PI: Piamonte
34: Montpellier	LI: Liguria
30: Nimes	LO: Lombardia
48: Mende	SA: Sardinia
13: Marseille	LL: Lleida
84: Avignon	GI: Girona
83: Toulon	BA: Barcelona
05: Embrum	CS: Castellón
04: Digne	VC: Valencia
06: Nice	AL: Alicante
20: Corsica	MU: Murcia
	MH: Minorca
	PM: Mallorca
	IB: Ibiza

Simultaneity Heavy Rain Event-Cyclone

For each Heavy Rain Event (60 mm/24 h) in “regional unit” T for day D we look for the closest cyclone for day D at 06, 12 and 18 UTC and at 00 UTC for day D+1.

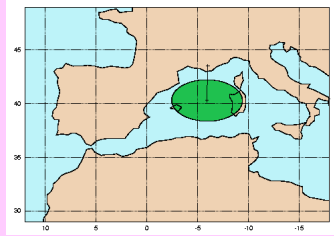


Due to the small number of events per “territorial unit” the results were grouped into **8 regions**:

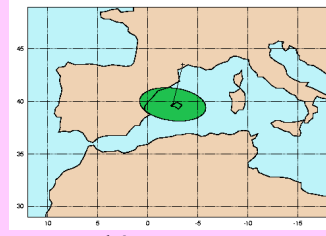


Frequency (%) of cyclonic centres within a 600 km radius
for the 8 regions: heavy rain events and random sample of events

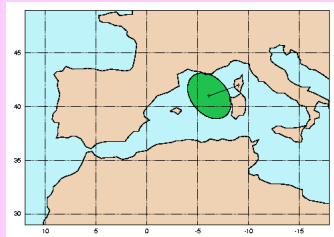
Simultaneity Cyclone-Heavy Rain



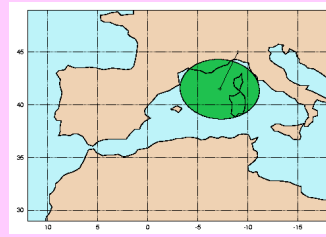
East-Rhône



West-Rhône

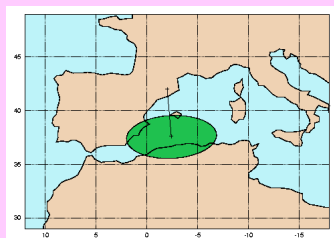


Corsica

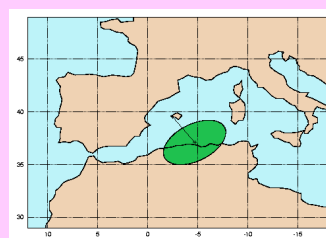


North Italy and Ticino

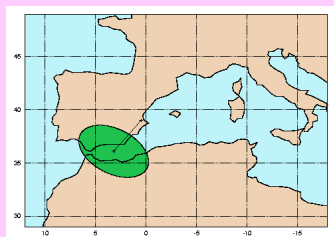
Simultaneity Cyclone-Heavy Rain



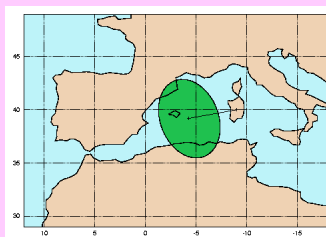
Catalonia



Balearic Islands

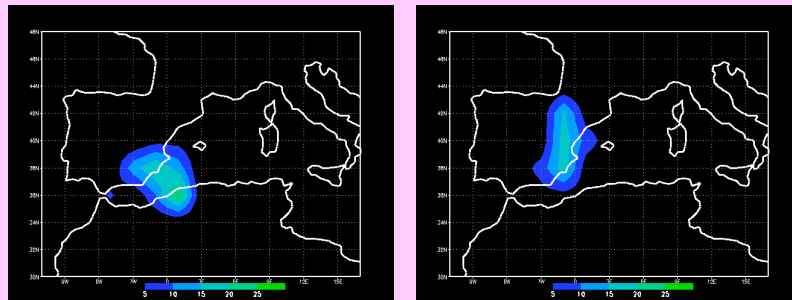


Valencia



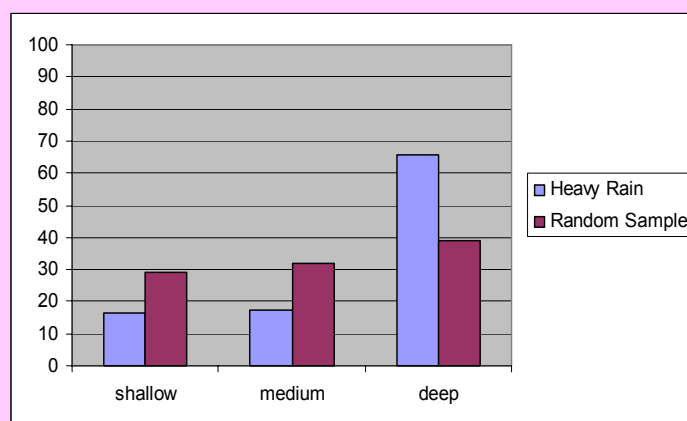
Sardinia

With a non-smoothed cyclone database, for the Valencian C. and Murcia region, in more than 90% of heavy rain events a cyclone is closer than 600 km. The same with a random sample of events, but in a different location:



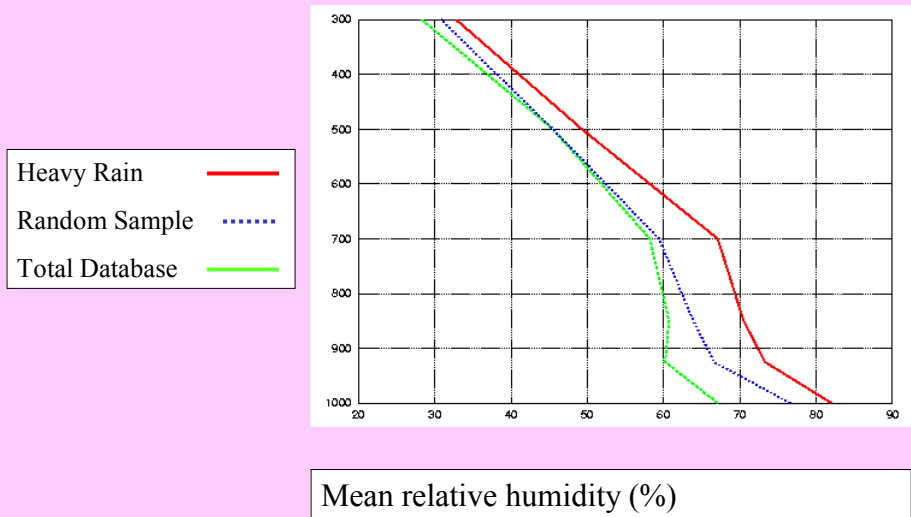
Frequency (%) of closest cyclonic centres
for heavy rain events (left) and a random sample events (right)

Tridimensional structure of cyclones



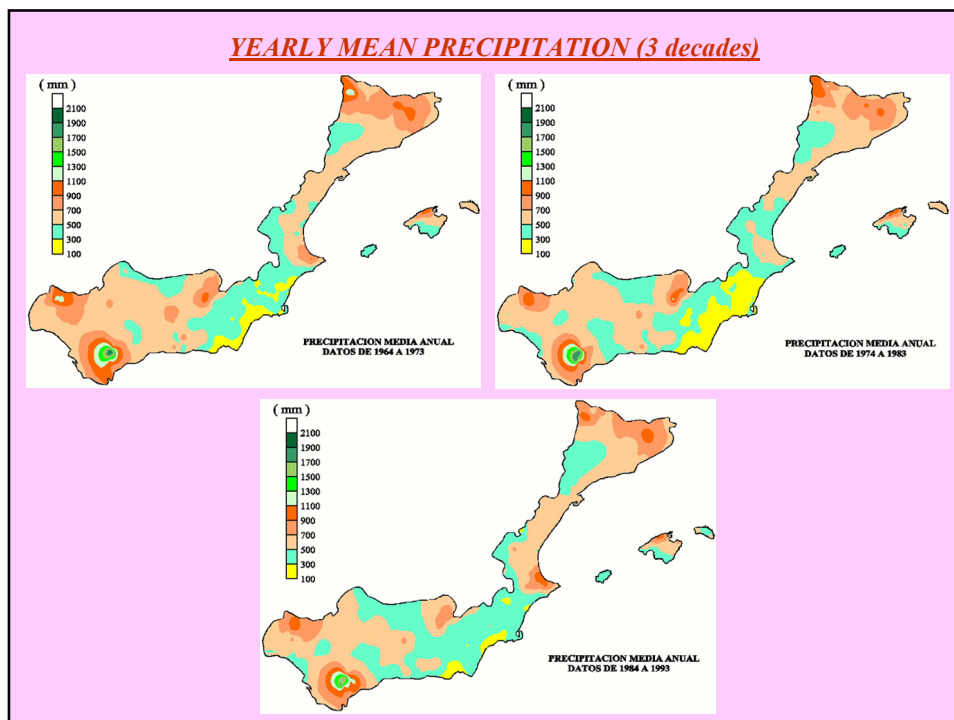
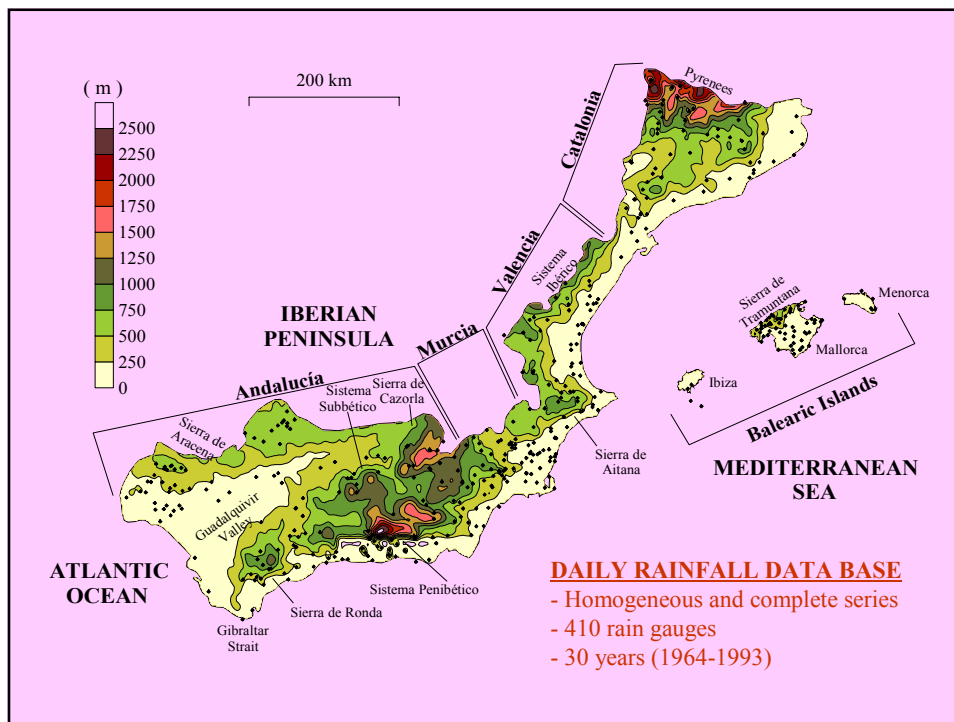
Frequency (%) of cyclone depth for all the closest cyclones:
heavy rain events and a random sample of events

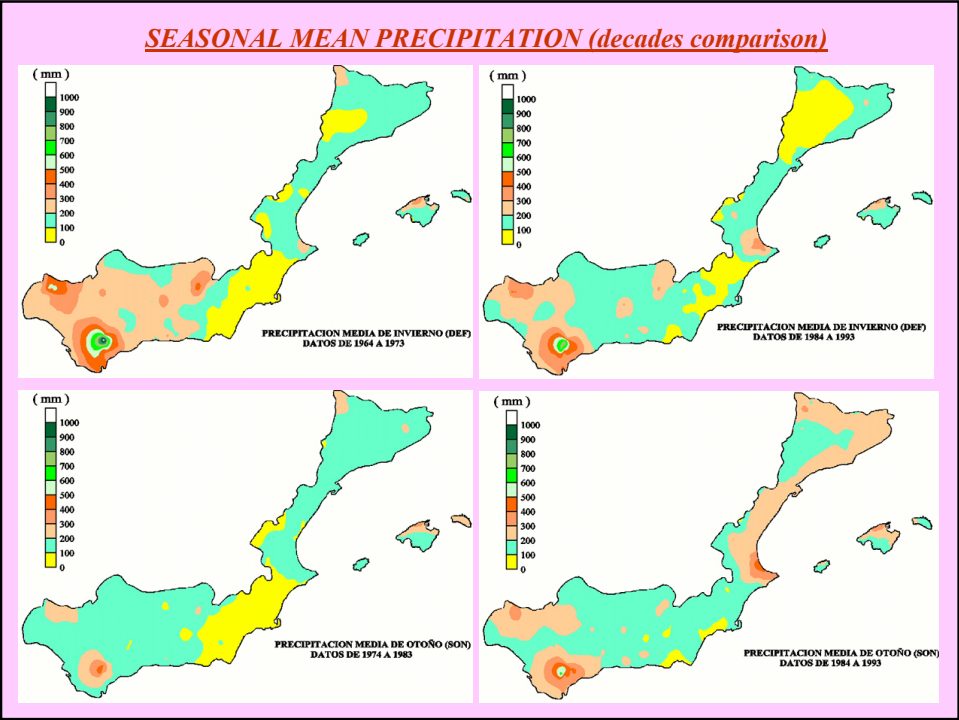
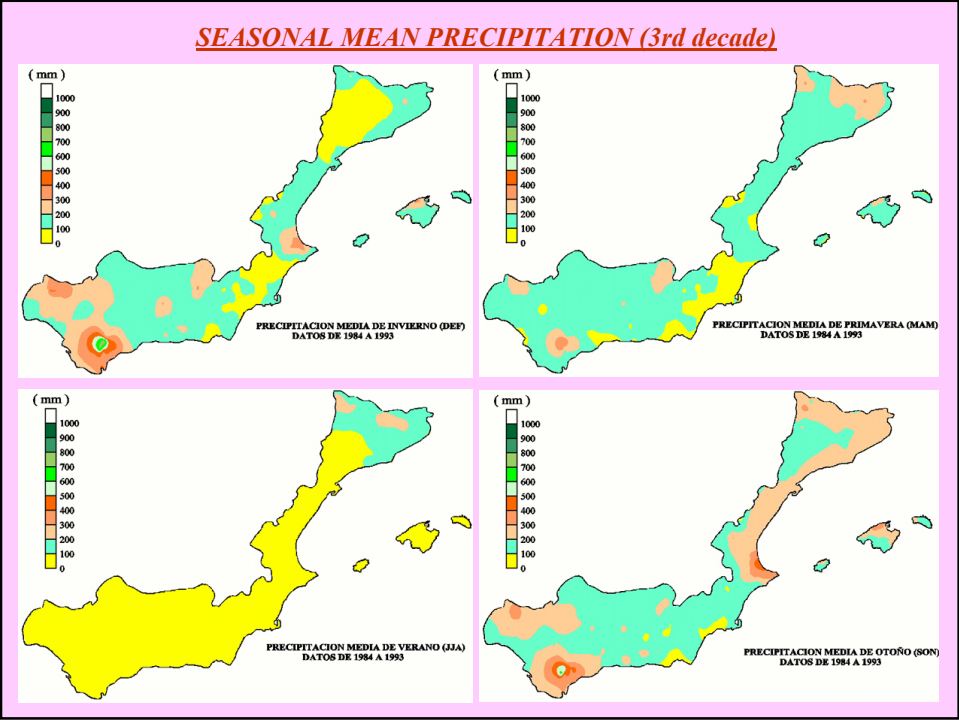
Tridimensional structure of cyclones



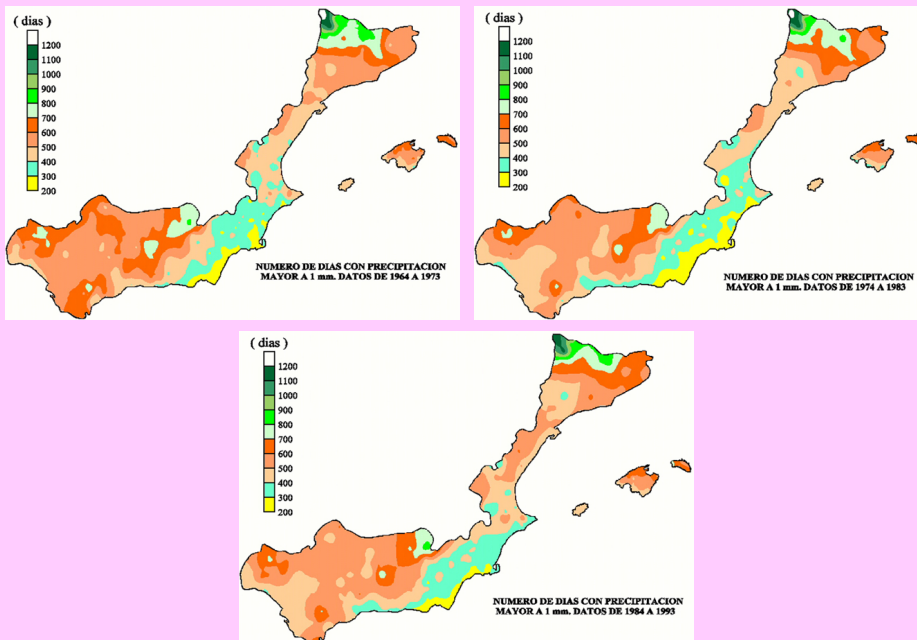
PRECIPITATION CLIMATOLOGY IN MEDITERRANEAN SPAIN

Trying to summarize the complex reality ...

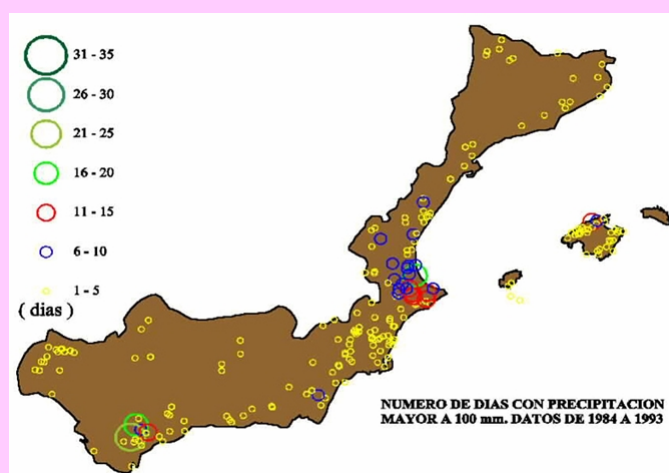




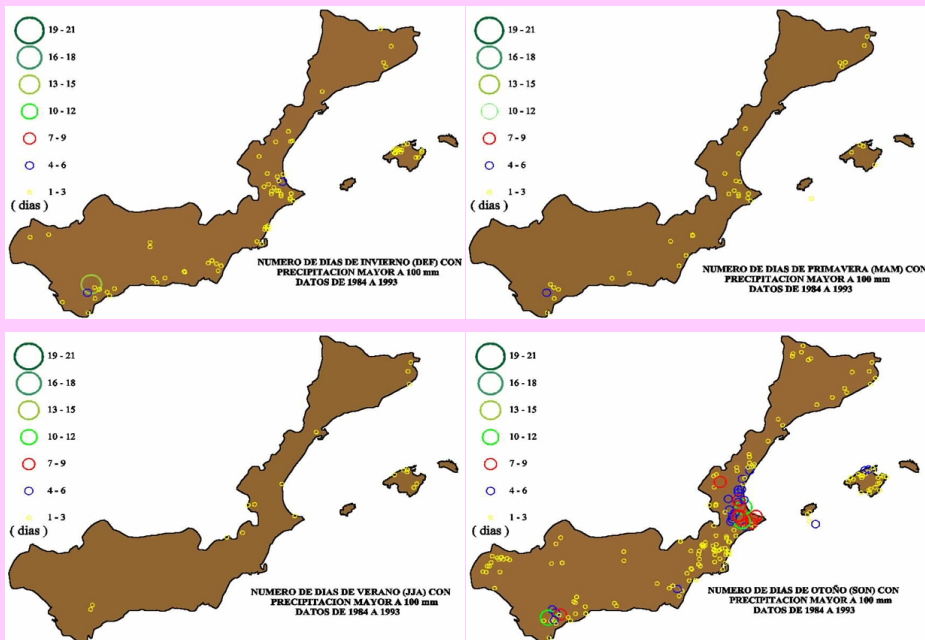
DAYS WITH PRECIPITATION, ≥ 1 mm (3 decades)



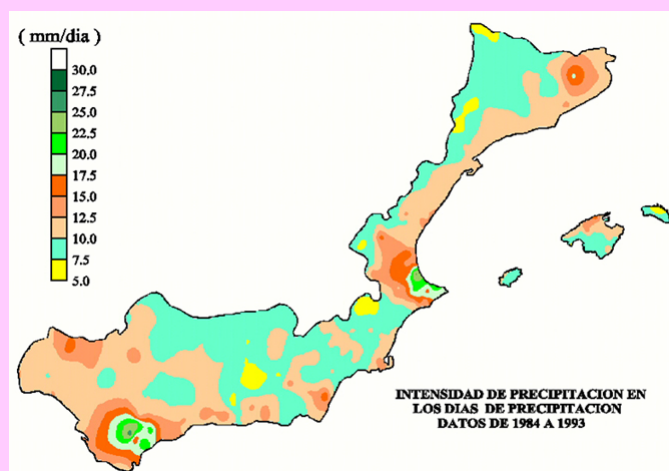
DAYS WITH EXTREME RAINFALL, ≥ 100 mm (3rd decade)



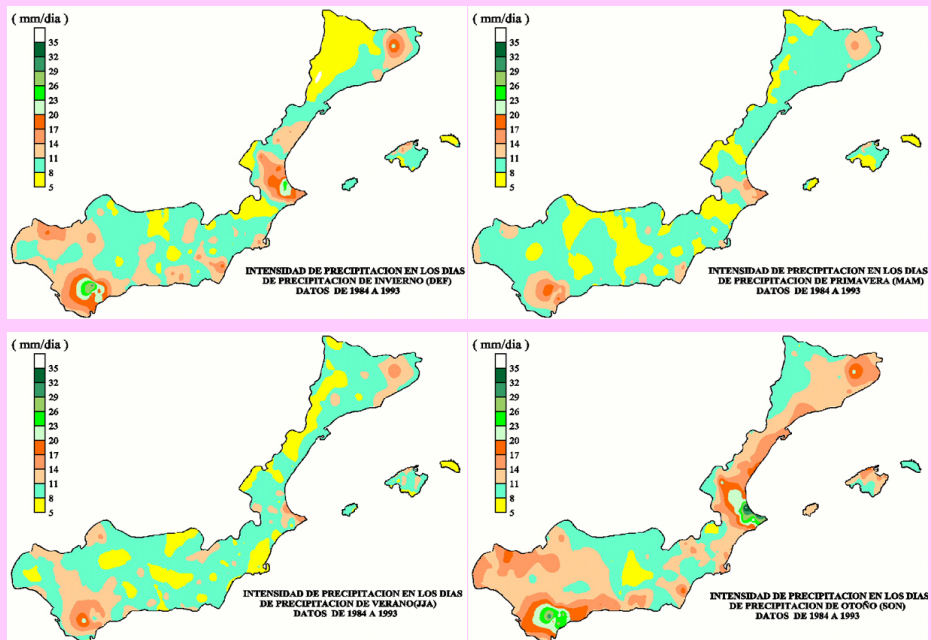
DAYS WITH EXTREME RAINFALL, ≥ 100 mm (seasons of 3rd decade)



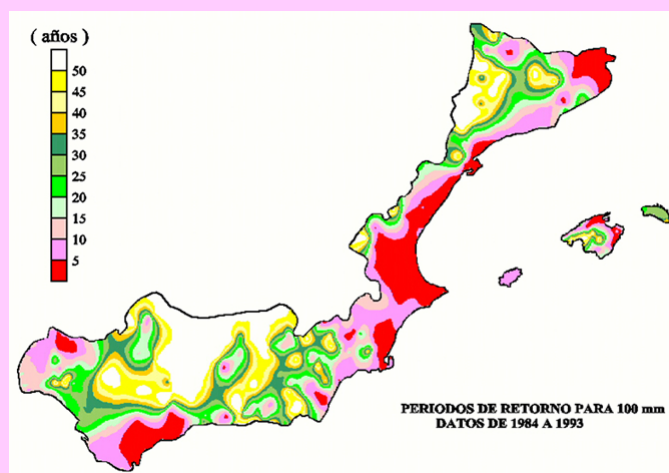
MEAN RATE OF DAILY RAINFALLS (3rd decade)



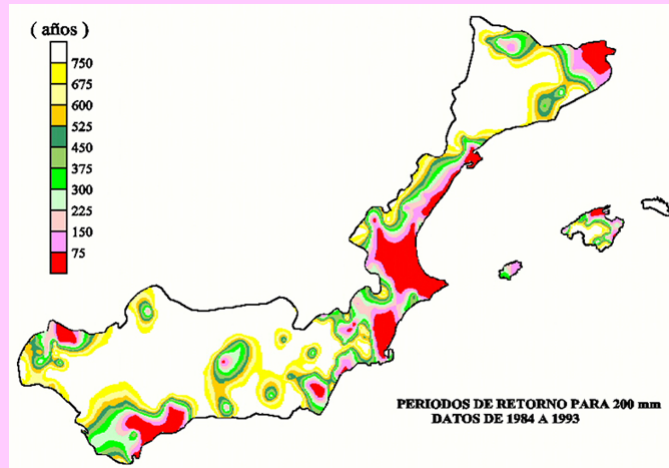
MEAN RATE OF DAILY RAINFALLS (seasons of 3rd decade)



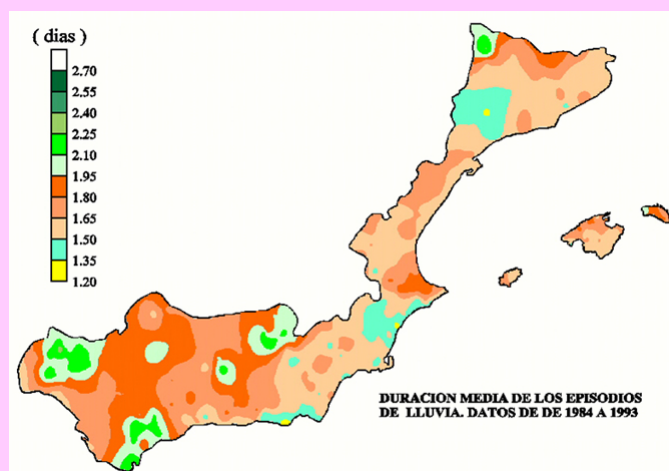
RECURRENCE INTERVALS, 100 mm events (from 3rd decade)



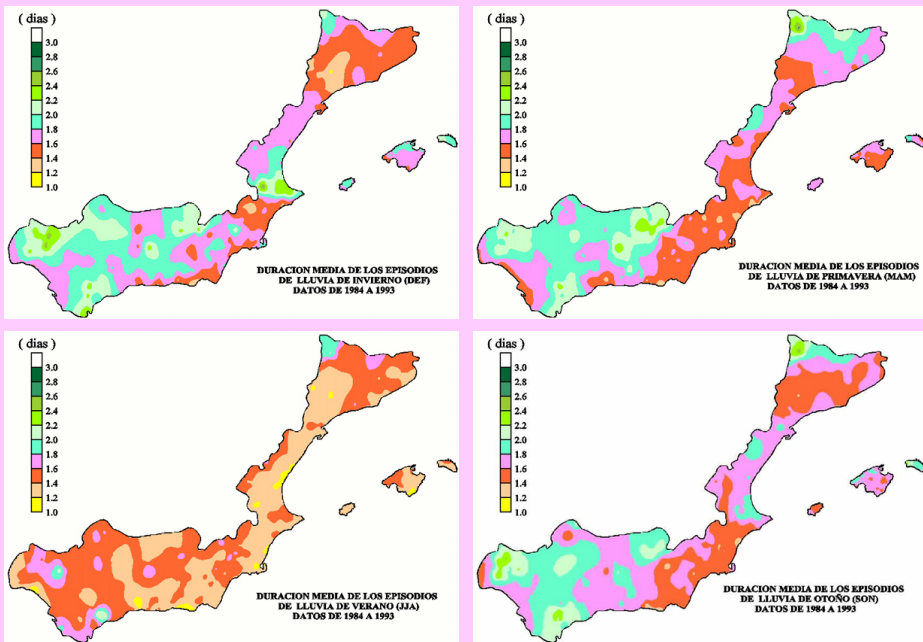
RECURRENCE INTERVALS, 200 mm events (from 3rd decade)



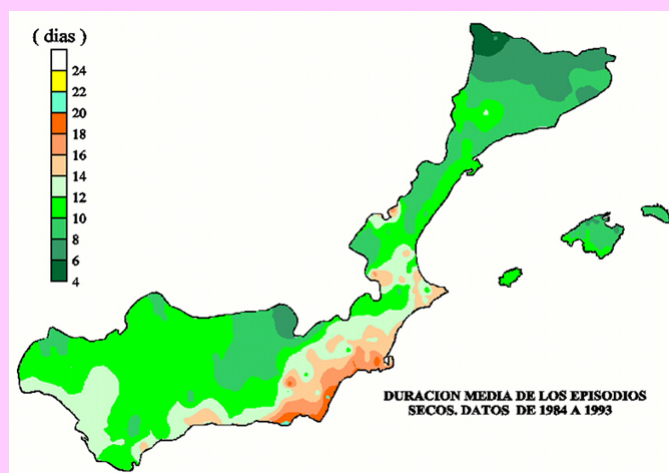
MEAN DURATION OF WET EPISODES (3rd decade)

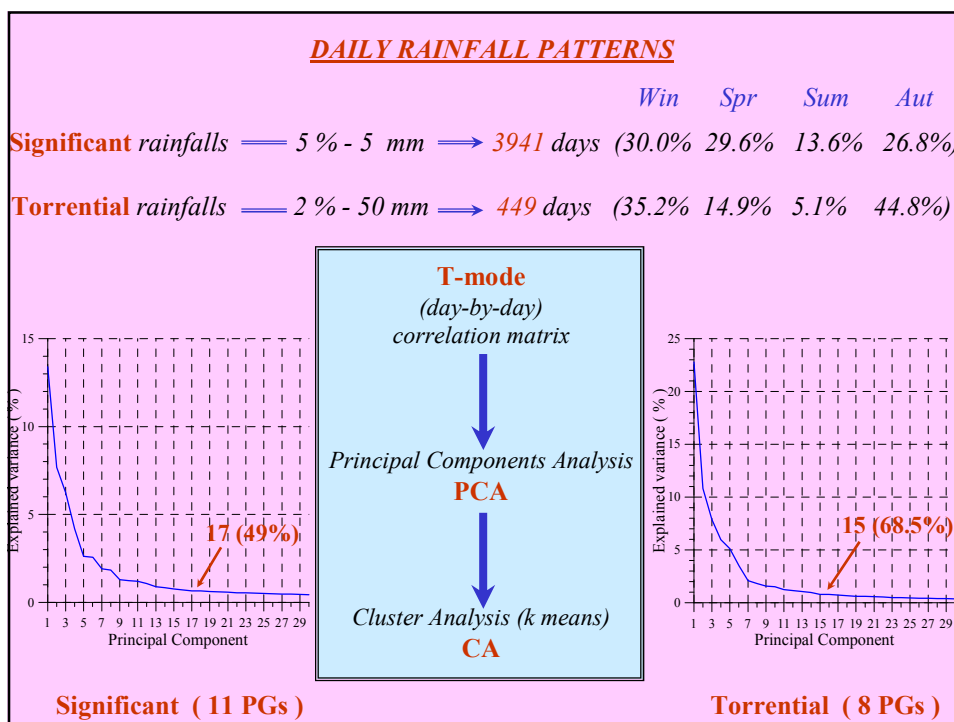
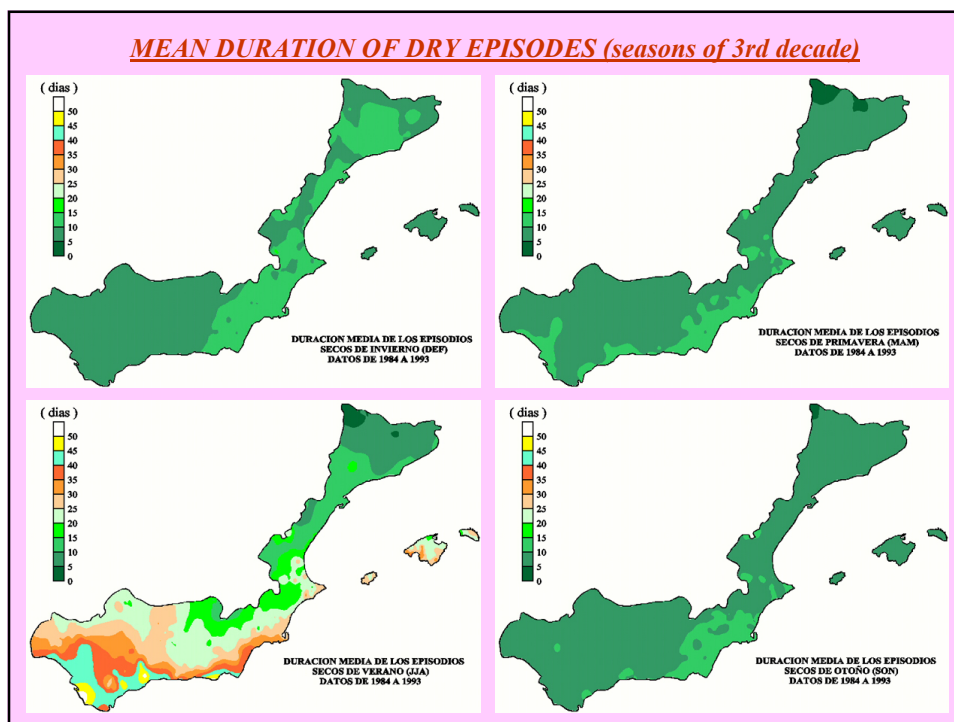


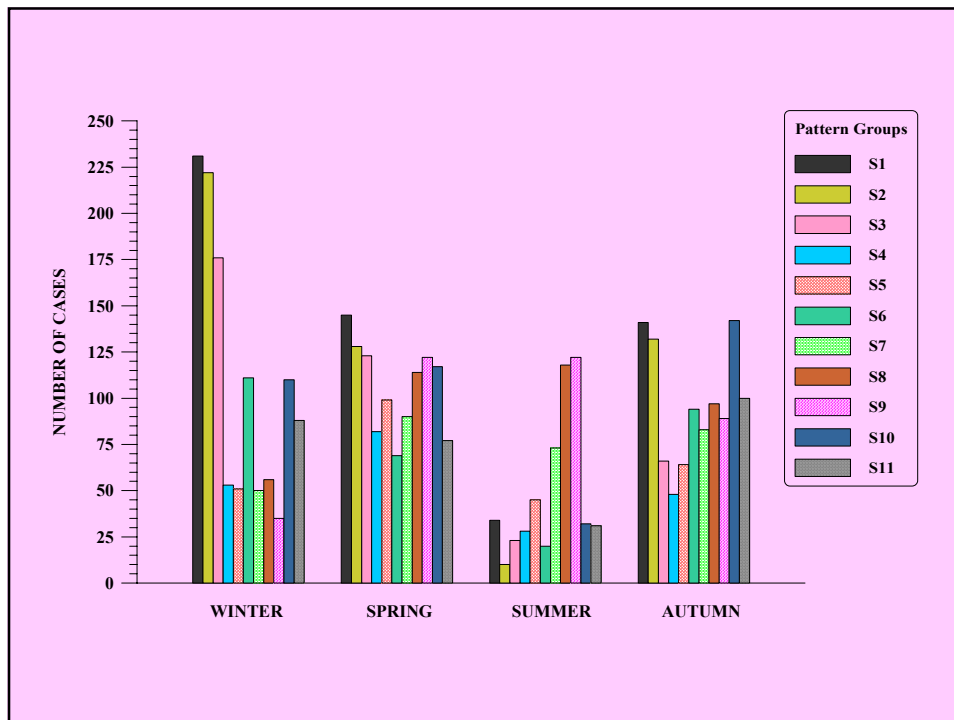
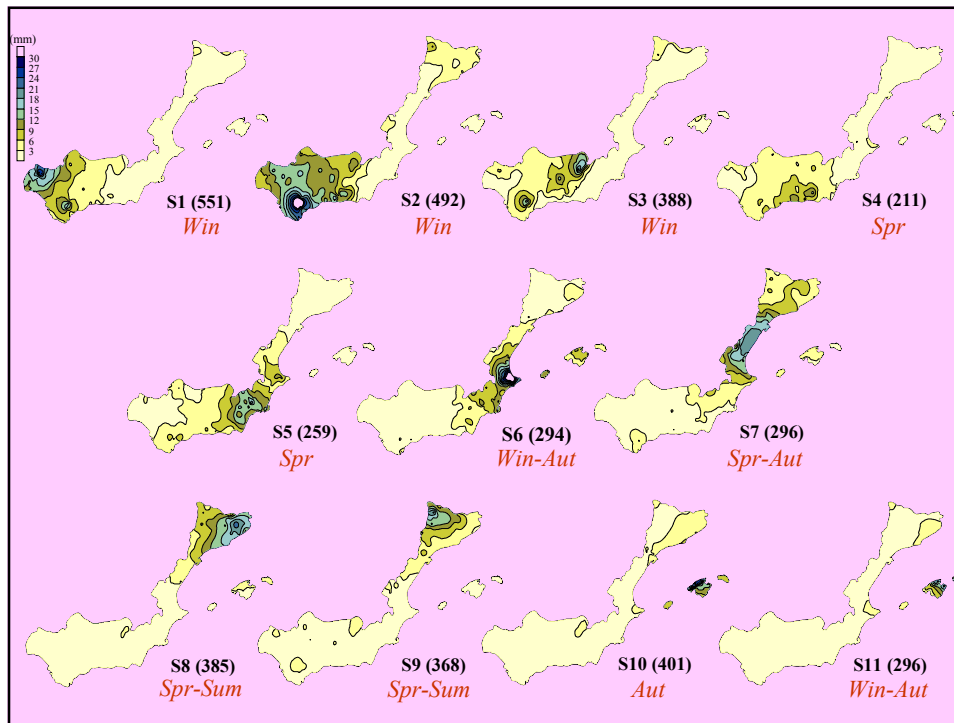
MEAN DURATION OF WET EPISODES (seasons of 3rd decade)



MEAN DURATION OF DRY EPISODES (3rd decade)







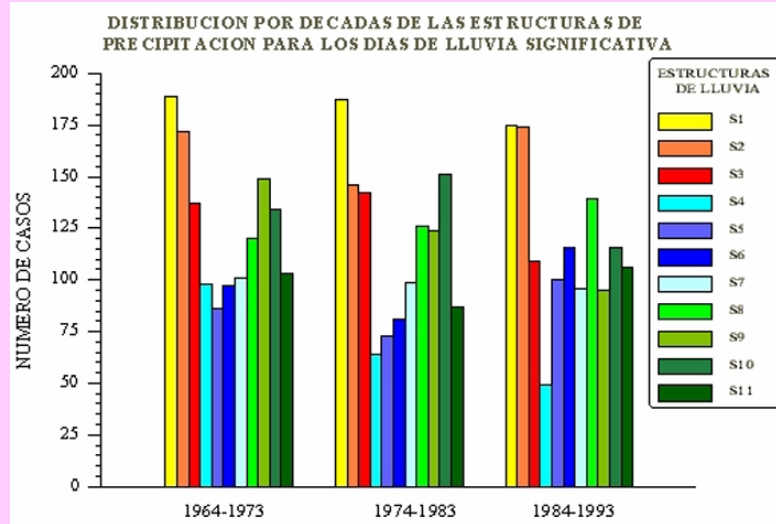
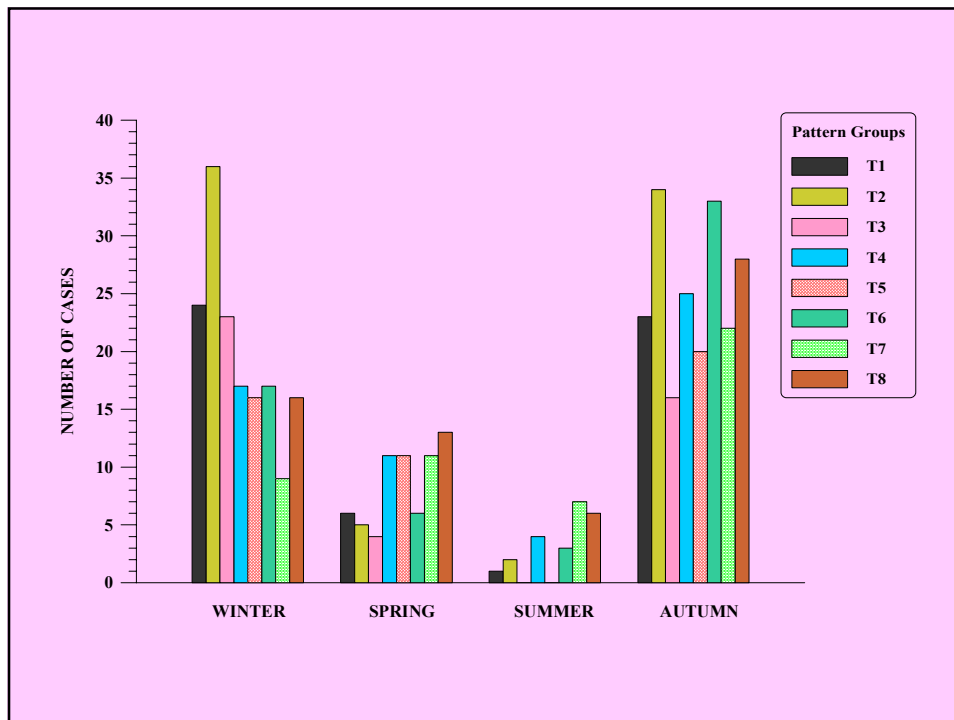
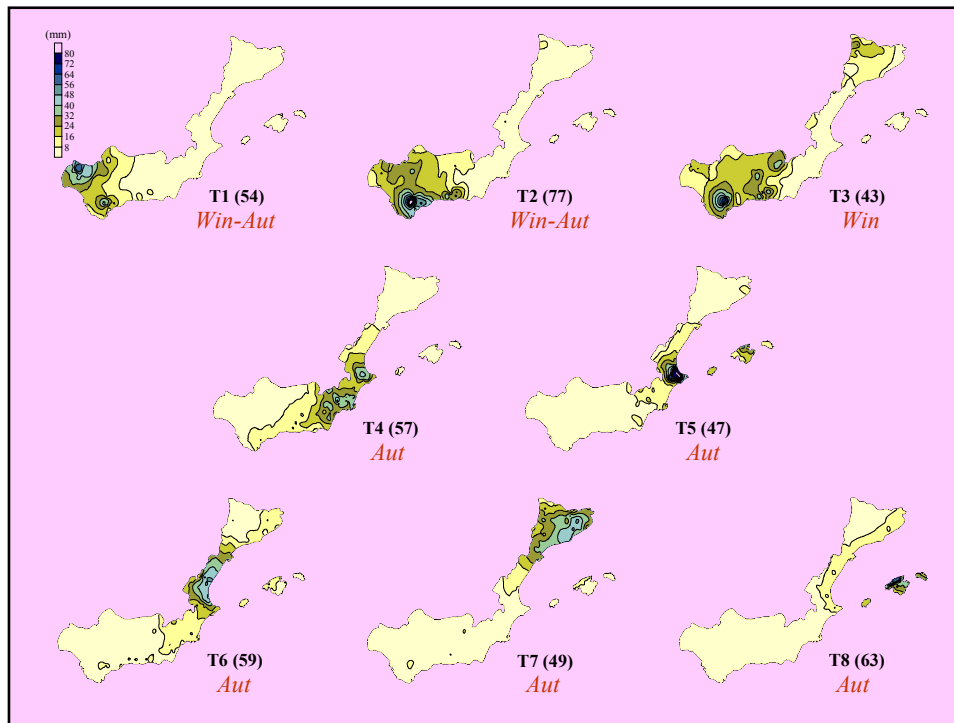
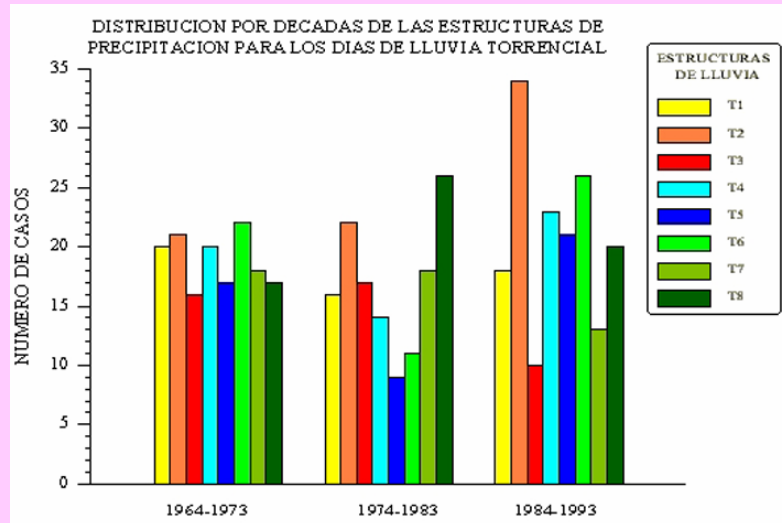


Table II. Probabilities (%) of getting the 11 significant rainfall PGs or an insignificant day (columns), conditioned to having the 11 PGs or an insignificant day (rows) on the previous day

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	INSIG
S1	21.6	26.5	8.0	3.6	3.8	1.8	3.6	3.1	9.3	2.4	1.3	15.1
S2	10.6	26.2	12.6	10.0	4.7	3.7	3.3	5.7	6.5	3.7	3.7	9.6
S3	7.0	6.2	24.7	3.4	2.8	1.0	2.3	3.6	4.1	5.9	5.2	33.8
S4	8.1	8.1	6.2	10.9	12.8	4.7	1.9	2.8	2.4	4.3	2.8	35.1
S5	3.9	4.6	1.9	11.6	18.5	11.6	9.7	3.1	2.7	3.5	2.7	26.3
S6	2.0	2.4	1.7	3.4	8.2	28.2	7.8	3.7	0.7	6.1	5.1	30.6
S7	3.7	4.1	4.4	2.7	4.4	8.8	19.9	13.9	5.4	6.4	4.1	22.3
S8	5.7	3.9	2.3	1.8	3.1	3.9	4.9	16.6	3.6	10.4	6.5	37.1
S9	5.7	3.8	6.3	2.7	0.8	1.6	7.3	11.4	15.2	4.9	1.9	38.3
S10	3.2	2.5	5.2	1.5	0.2	3.0	3.0	4.5	1.7	19.2	10.2	45.6
S11	3.0	4.1	3.4	1.4	2.4	4.4	3.4	3.4	0.3	12.8	14.5	47.0
INSIG	3.5	1.3	1.2	0.4	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.8	2.3	1.7	1.4	83.4

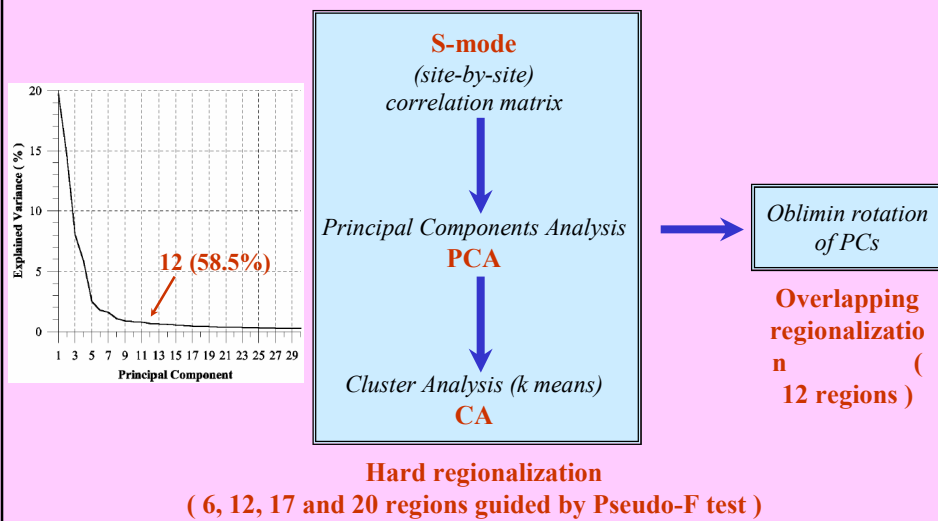




DAILY RAINFALL AFFINITY AREAS

Win Spr Sum Aut

Significant rainfalls — 5 % - 5 mm —→ 3941 days (30.0% 29.6% 13.6% 26.8%)



pseudo-F variable is formulated as:

$$pseudo-F = \frac{A}{W} \frac{n-k}{k-1}, \quad (1)$$

where A and W are the among- and within-cluster sum of squares, respectively, n is the number of objects (410 stations), and k is the number of clusters.

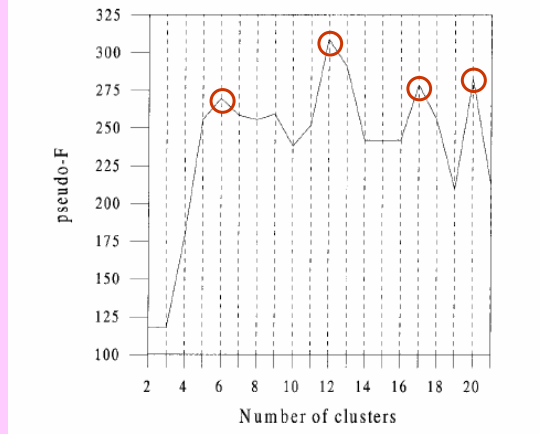
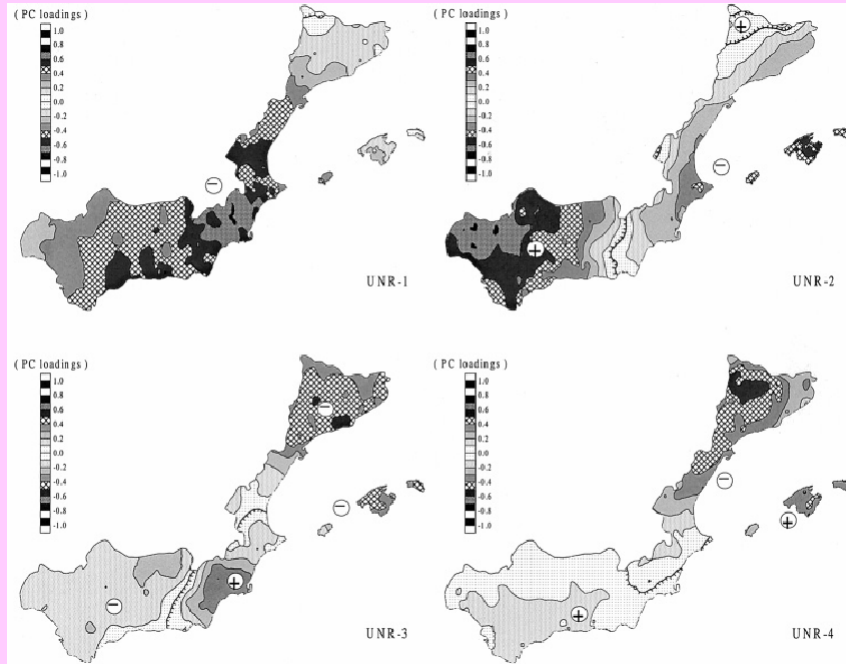


Figure 7. *Pseudo-F* test for several solutions of the hard regionalization



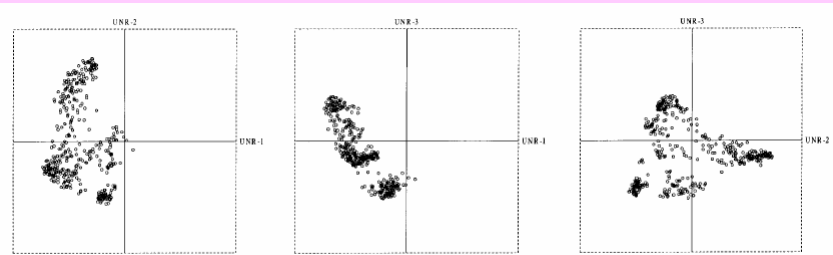


Figure 4. Selected examples of graphical pairwise plots for unrotated PCs

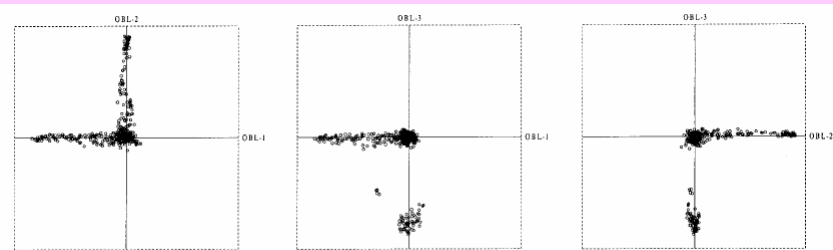
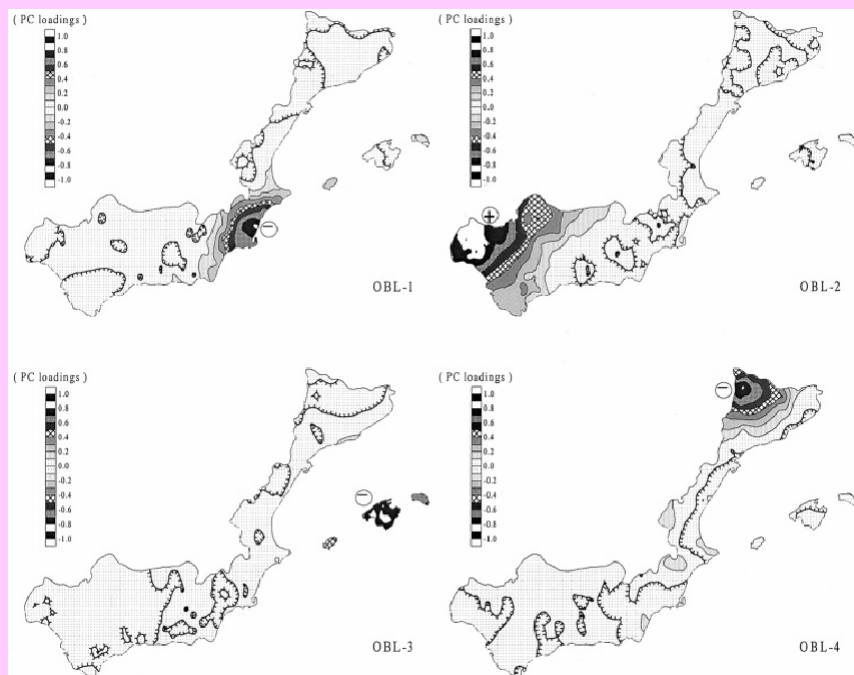
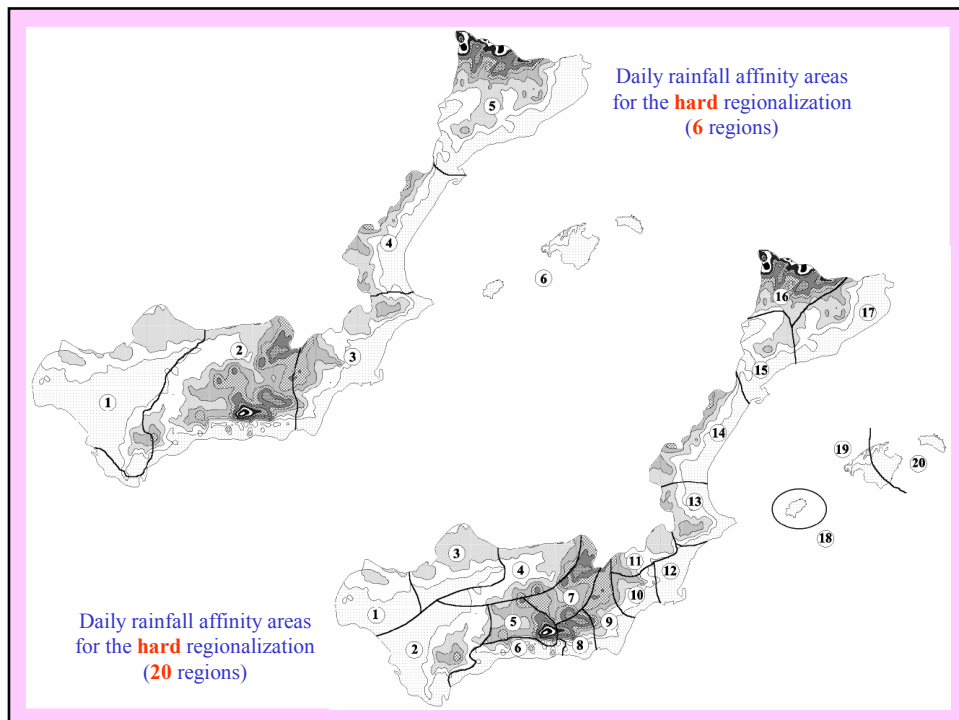
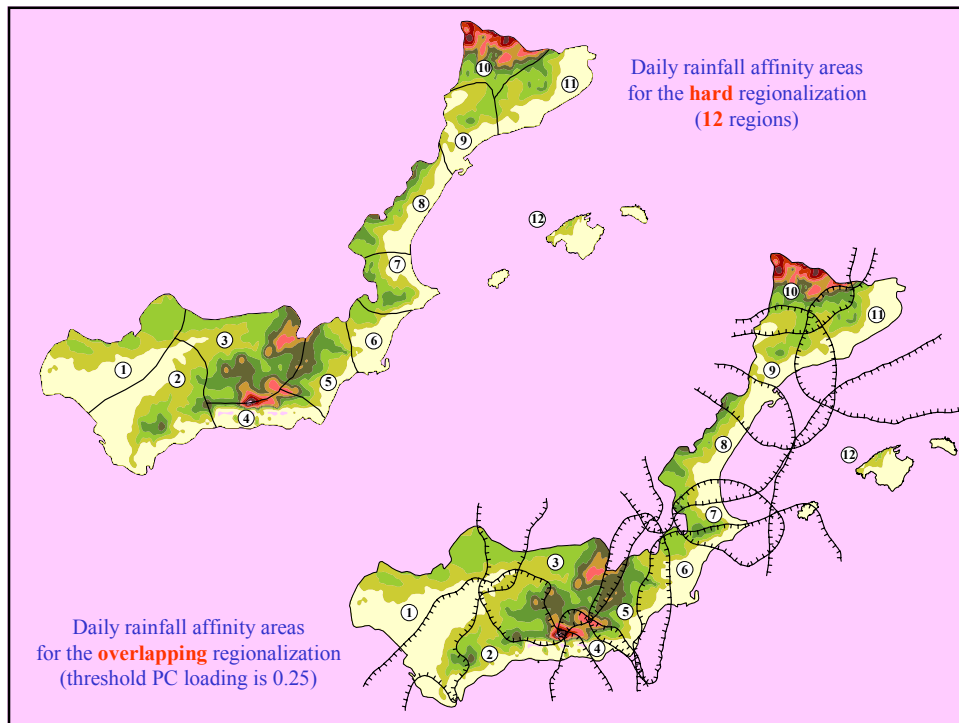


Figure 5. As in Figure 4 but for Oblimin-rotated PCs





A NATURAL QUESTION EMERGING FROM THIS SESSION ...

**WHICH ARE THE ATMOSPHERIC CIRCULATION PATTERNS
ASSOCIATED WITH SIGNIFICANT DAILY RAINFALL IN THE
SPANISH MEDITERRANEAN AREA ???
(in Session 9)**